

**Human Rights Commission Meeting**  
**April 2, 2014, 6:30-8:30 pm, First Floor Meeting Room, Town Hall**

Present: Gregory Bascomb, Carol Ross, Kathleen Anderson, Ingrid Askew, Damon Mallory, Sid Ferreria, Lois Raj

Absent: Liam Brodigan, Emily Jung

Others: Deb Radway, and approximately 13 residents and guests

Meeting called to order by Gregory Bascomb at 6:30 pm

1. Agenda Review/Additions: None. This is a special meeting of the Human Rights Commission called to review recent events at the Amherst Public Schools and to consider a Human Rights Commission response.
2. Commissioner Carol Ross opened the discussion. “All eyes are on us” and we have the opportunity to engage the community in a productive and progressive way. We can be forward thinking, unifying and positive, using social media and video to promote the dialogue and capitalize on the issues and energy that recent political campaigns generated. We know that Carolyn Gardner’s situation is part of a bigger problem in the community, there are systemic problems, economic and class problems in Amherst, in the United States. Let’s be innovative, creative futuristic, not reactive. We need new ways to unravel old perspectives about what racism means—a World Café life energy but with more control over the narrative.
3. Sid Ferreria- The system failed, and now we are holding students accountable because we failed them? This does not make sense. Schools do not have the tools to deal with their situations. Until we unravel the layers we cannot affect change. When part of the community is not happy, it affects the Town and people do not want to live here. It is NOT a HAPPY VALLEY and there will be economic consequences when unhappiness exists.
4. Kathleen Anderson- there is a history of racial bias in the Amherst Public Schools, there are verbal attacks and sabotage against Carolyn Gardner. It is a frustrating time. We need to address the issue before us, and not move from one incident to the next. We need sustained and ongoing actions to bring about systemic change in the school district. Need regular articles or column about racism in newspaper every week. Every teacher must be required to attend training.
5. Damon Mallory- need to reach out to young people too, they use other media. Youth are different in the presence of adults. Community needs to step in. Create a message and allow it to be talked about. Engage the people who get it and expand the circles.
6. Various Guests speak individually –
  - a. I work at UMASS College of Education. Not enough people of color want to become teachers. It’s not a black vs white issue, my Asian community does not know racism exists.
  - b. This is about power and you need to initiate and use the methodology of a campaign. Have to disrupt business as usual to force the conversation. Start with who you have relationships with and build concentric circles to change belief systems and dynamics. I can help.
  - c. How can we get white teachers into training? They should not get licensed, hired or keep their jobs if they have not been to training. Training starts at the top. Need to fight for curriculum that promotes equity. If leaders promote equity all will get in line.
  - d. Conundrum of people who “don’t get it” vs the people “who are feeling it”.
  - e. Take personal responsibility. Advocate for those you care for, don’t let others define your destiny. Maintain high standards. Teachers of color in the schools do not feel support from their own community.
  - f. I feel anger at things going on in the schools- I am a strong woman, a good parent, but I see wrong things going on. Something has to be done.
7. Ideas: Use film and media to engage people; Amilcar Shabazz is soliciting ideas for an Amherst Media forum.
8. Greg Bascomb - Dialogue has begun and needs to continue, but meeting has to move on to its other topic.

9. DRONE PETITION to Town Meeting- Without discussion, a motion was made and seconded to endorse the Petitioned Town Meeting Article on drones. Vote was 6 in favor-0- opposed and 1 abstention.
10. Chair Bascomb asked for another Special Human Rights Commission meeting to be scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, in order to continue consideration of Human Rights Commission response.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25pm.

Deborah Radway  
Notetaker